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NESTING INSTINCT

Inspired by the peacock roosting in their derelict Dartmoor barn, Siobhan and Mat Hayles converted the granite farm building and injected the interior with dramatic flashes of iridescent colour.

Story: Debbie Jeffery Photography: Unique Home Stays



IN BRIEF

Location Ashburton, Devon

Property Conversion of barn into holiday let

Owners Siobhan and Mat Hayles

Barn cost Purchased as part of a farm complex

Spent £200,000

IN DETAIL

Contacts

PROJECT

Architect Woodford Architecture and Interiors: woodfordarchitecture.com

Interior designer Siobhan Hayles: woodfordarchitecture.com

Builder Ben Watts: 07796 260016

Structural engineer Ballantine Arnold Ltd: 01548 850634

STRUCTURE

Windows and doors Bowden and Tucker: bowdentucker.co.uk

Corrugated roofing sheets Cladco: cladco.co.uk

Waney-edge-timber cladding Anton Coaker: anton-coaker.co.uk

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Cocktail chairs, Coke sign, peacock lamp and furniture Rust and the Wolf: rustandthewolf.co.uk

Kitchen Magnet: magnet.co.uk/kitchens

Kitchen handles M Marcus: m-marcus.com

Bathroom Sapphire Spaces: sapphirespaces.co.uk

Stove Jøtul: jotul.com

Copper flue Rangemoors: rangemoors.co.uk

Limestone floor Mandarin Stone: mandarinstone.com

Yellow sofa Loaf: loaf.com

Paint and cushions Abigail Ahern: abigailahern.com

Circles mirror Graham and Green:

grahamandgreen.co.uk

Air source heat pump and underfloor heating

Source Energy: sourceenergy.co.uk

Gold metro tiles Walls and Floors:

wallsandfloors.co.uk

Renovation costs

Builder, materials, doors and windows.....	£85,000
Flooring, electrics, plumbing.....	£48,000
Shower room and bath.....	£11,750
Kitchen.....	£7,800
Lighting.....	£5,390
Landscaping, furniture, decoration.....	£42,000
TOTAL	£199,940

Peacock Blue is available for holiday rental with Unique Home Stays: 01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com



Before



Peacock Blue was not only named after its former occupant, but the interior design was styled as a tribute to this colourful character. Nicknamed Peeky by Siobhan and Mat Hayles' sons – Connor, seven, and Fizzy, five – the strutting peacock which once inhabited this derelict Devon barn became a source of inspiration for the couple during the conversion project.

Gloriously located on the southern edge of Dartmoor, with outstanding views over moorland and open countryside to the coast, the barn was purchased as part of an historic farm by the Hayles in October 2011, and has been meticulously converted to create a one-bedroom holiday let, just a short distance from the Devon village of Holne.

“We’d renovated nine properties in London and the West Country prior to buying the farm, and had also run our own property letting business,” explains interior designer Siobhan. “When we saw an advert for the 40-acre farm we fell in love with the idea of living on Dartmoor, even though the house and outbuildings were little more than crumbling ruins.”

Once used for storage and livestock, the granite barn was more recently occupied by Peeky, who arrived in the summer of 2012 and has remained living on the farm. The low-slung single-storey structure had been roofed in corrugated iron, which had rusted and was letting in water. Some of the A-frames were missing entirely and others had rotted, causing the roof to sag dangerously.

Exterior

Set in the heart of Dartmoor National Park, Peacock Blue is a recently completed granite barn conversion which is part of an historic farmstead.





A stream ran through the rear of the barn where a spring had opened up, so everything was mouldy, saturated and moss-covered inside; the hayloft had collapsed and the building was partly buried into the slope of the hillside, but despite all this Siobhan and Mat had high hopes for the structure.

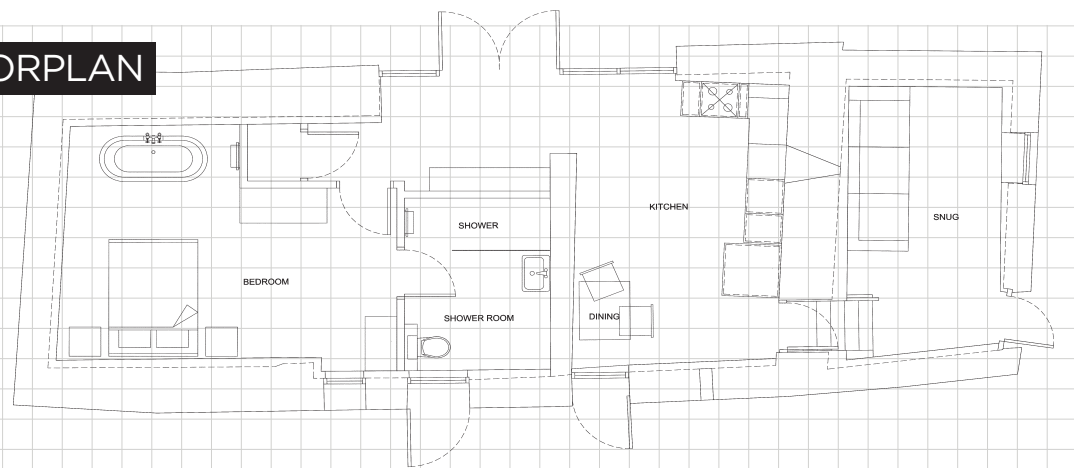
“We wanted to combine the feel of a traditional Dartmoor farm building with the luxury of a designer hotel suite,” explains Mat, who recently launched his own business sourcing and making one-off vintage items.

Although the farm isn’t listed it was mentioned in the Domesday Book, and stands within the Dartmoor

National Park, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, so there were a number of planning constraints and restrictions, including the materials which could be used.

Mat and Siobhan explained to the National Park Authority that the only way they could afford to restore the ruined barn would be if they were allowed to convert it into a holiday let. They employed local architectural practice Woodford Architecture and Interiors to produce drawings for the proposed conversion – retaining the exterior appearance of the barn right down to the black corrugated metal roof. ➔

FLOORPLAN





Kitchen

Magnet cabinets have been customised with a quartzite worktop and polished handles in the open-plan kitchen, and underfloor heating was laid beneath limestone flooring throughout. Brass-coloured café-style chairs are teamed with a bespoke table made from a fish smoker topped in grey glass.

Cocktail area

Moorland views can be enjoyed through the four-metre-wide set of glazed doors near the cocktail seating area, which has its own bar. The mirror on the back wall reflects the views and light.

“We were restricted by the size and shape of the building, and were also instructed by the planners to retain one particular internal stone wall, which is only about three metres long and a metre and a half high,” says Siobhan. “At the time we were frustrated about this because we would have liked a more open-plan layout, but now we’ve grown to love the low wall in the kitchen.”

All living accommodation is on the ground floor, which enables the soaring five-metre-high ceilings at the centre of the barn to still be fully appreciated. Steps from the kitchen lead down to a cosy snug in the lower part of the building, which follows the sloping contours of the land, and the former cart door opening has been infilled with a four-metre area of glazed doors beside a cocktail seating area.

“We decided to push the bathroom wall back to make the cocktail area larger, because the view from there is amazing,” says Siobhan. “The separate snug room is in a part of the barn where I kept bees when we first moved here, and which we needed to connect to the main building with new stairs.”





The snug

The snug is stepped down from the kitchen, and has a hand-built staircase made from copper tubing and timber posts found on the farm. A turmeric velvet sofa is dressed with colourful cushions, and the wood-burning stove has an unusual copper flue.

An initial planning application for converting the barn was refused, and the couple and their architect appealed this decision. An historical survey was then required, and in the summer of 2013 permission was granted to convert the building. The family lived in their recently restored farmhouse during the seven-month project – ensuring that they were on hand to oversee the work, which started in November 2014.

“We employed a local builder, who’s been amazing, and Mat got involved with as much labouring as possible,” explains Siobhan. “He stripped out the barn, which was partly underpinned, and the granite walls have been rebuilt using stone from the farm. We tanked the back of the building, which is buried into the hillside, and put in new land drains around it. Legend has it that there’s treasure buried somewhere on the farm, but sadly we’ve not found anything yet.”

Tanking membrane has been concealed internally behind reclaimed barn siding, which ties in with the building’s rustic feel, and locally sourced waney-edged cedar was used externally for an upper section of walling, where a frameless round window, sourced on eBay, has been introduced high above the kitchen.

Handmade timber windows and glazed doors were installed elsewhere in existing openings, with fixed glazing overlooking the leat to the rear, where rooms have black-painted shutters for privacy.



Master bedroom

A roll-top bath was installed in the master bedroom for a boutique hotel feel, and rustic European barn siding has been used throughout.



“I love metal Crittall windows, but Dartmoor National Park would never have allowed them, so painting our hardwood windows black gives a similar effect,” says Siobhan, who chose colours and textures inspired by the peacock’s vivid tail to furnish the barn.

Internally, the stone walls have been repointed using traditional lime mortar, and timber barn siding was used in every room to clad walls and create features. One wall in the glazed cocktail lounge has been painted a vibrant blue-green, against which two striking reupholstered 1950s chairs now stand.

“I also decorated a lamp with some of Pecky’s cast-off feathers, which stand out beautifully against the wall colour,” says Siobhan, who compiled moodboards of ideas. “Having a theme to work with really helps when it comes to the interior design.”

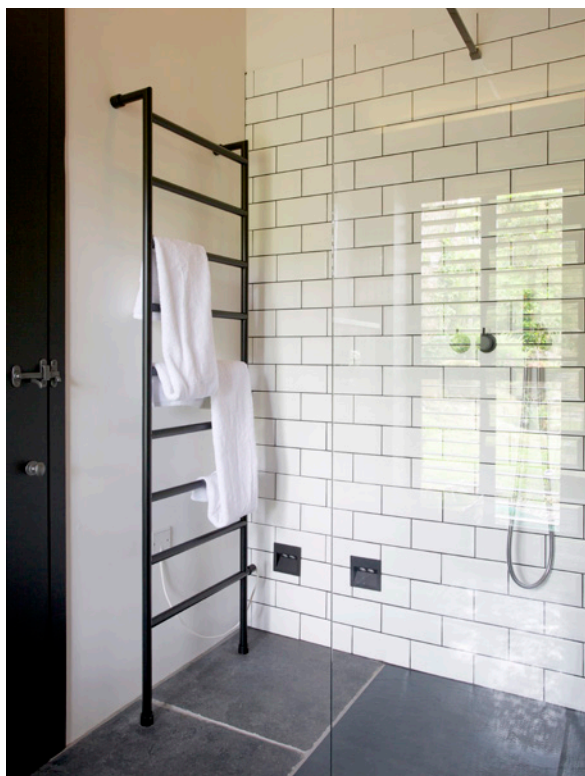
Durable limestone flooring has been laid over underfloor heating throughout the barn, and was chosen because of the fool’s gold mineral pyrite, which sparkles in the stone. An air source heat pump is connected to the heating system, providing economical energy.

“We customised a Magnet kitchen, and fitted a marble-effect quartzite worktop with polished brass handles and a gold tap, to match the gold metro tile splashback,” says Siobhan. “Pecky has flecks of gold in him, and introducing touches of gold into the barn has created some lovely features.” ➔

Inspired by renowned interior designer Abigail Ahern's love of rich, dark colours, Siobhan decided to specify black sanitaryware for the luxury shower room, and enjoyed creating plays of dark and light throughout the property. "People thought I was crazy to want a black bathroom, but it may become a new trend," she laughs.

White metro tiles were chosen for the shower, and also as a splashback to the bespoke vanity unit – made from a console table, into which drainage was cut. Mat also made the one-off dining table in the kitchen, using a fish smoker for the base, topped with a circular grey glass top.

"We've thoroughly enjoyed working together on the barn and it's been fun to play about with ideas inspired by Peeky," says Siobhan. "Restoring a derelict farm hasn't been easy, but it's been worth it to enjoy such an amazing setting. When we lived in London we'd come to camp on Dartmoor for holidays – never imagining that one day we would be living here alongside a peacock!"



Shower room

The separate shower room has a generous two-metre-long shower and striking black sanitaryware.

My self build EXPERIENCE

What was the high point of the project?

Having fun with the design and seeing everything come together, especially when the glass doors went in and the barn was weatherproof.

...and the low point?

We were all poisoned by the water when we first moved here, before it was properly treated, as it came straight from the moor and made everyone in the family sick.

Your best buy?

The soda crate tables from Rust and the Wolf which are on trend and so versatile. They're functional as you can store things in them and can create a beautiful display through the smoked glass.

...and the biggest extravagance?

The bathroom was extravagant, with Dornbracht and Vola fittings, and was the most expensive room in the house.

What is your top tip?

Seek advice, but then be daring and try to develop your own style.